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ABSTRACT

"The Reading Project" in adult basic education (ABE), designed by the Province of Saskatchewan, consists of 14 sections containing 512 exercises in listening, reading, and spelling skills. This study compares the effectiveness of the project with conventional teaching of reading in ABE classes. A total of 257 adults participated in the experimental, control, or unmatched groups. A standardized pretest revealed no significant initial differences in the reading performance of the participants. At the conclusion of the eight month period, the two matched groups repeated the standardized test and, in addition, were tested on ten informal silent readings of varicus controlled lengths, contents, and reading difficulties. Analyses of the formal and informal tests show significant gains in vocabulary, comprehension, and total reading for students who participated in the project. The study offers 14 recommendations for developing a realistic and effective reading program for adults. (HAI)

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THE SASKATCHEWAN READING EXPERIMENT IN ADULT BASIC EDUCATION

by

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The Saskatchewan Reading Experiment in Adult Basic Education

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Running head: Saskatchewan Reading Experiment

The Saskatchewan Reading Experiment in Adult Basic Education

This study was prepared to report on the "Implementation of THE READING PROJECT in Adult Basic Education (ABE) (Taschow, 1976). The implementation of THE READING PROJECT was the continuation of a preceding three-year study on how reading was taught in ABE throughout the Province of Saskatchewan. These three years were mainly designated to gain informations, interspersed with informal dialogues with ABE instructors and upon their request resulted in semimonthly educational letters called THE SERVICEFRIEND (Taschow 1973), published by the Department of Continuing Education. At the end of the third year, the Department of Continuing Education and Canada Manpower invited the investigator to write THE READING PROJECT (Taschow, 1975). It consisted of fourteen sections containing 512 exercises in listening, reading and spelling skills. All these exercises were closely related to the existing instructional procedures observed in ABE. Each section of THE READING PROJECT was accompanied by an Instructor Manual that explained, exemplified and spelled out (1) Educational Goals, (2) How To Do, (3) Difficulty Distribution of Exercises, (4) Competency to be achieved and (5) Diagnostic Recommendations.

To find out how THE READING PROJECT would affect daily teaching procedures in ABE and if its implementation would result in statistically significant differences versus conventional teaching of reading, this study of action research was undertaken.

Statement of Purposes

This study purported to (1) bring about greater awareness in teaching reading in subject areas in ABE, (2) use adult materials in teaching basic and advanced reading skills, (3) investigate if teaching reading resulted in significant improvement when contents of THE READING PROJECT were applied to and integrated in daily instructions and (4) make recommendations based on the findings on how to maintain and promote improvements in teaching reading. To explain these purposes to ABE supervisors, administrators and instructors in the province, orientation sessions were held before the study began.

Identifying the Study Population

During the orientation sessions it became apparent that participation in this study had to be on voluntary basis for both ABE instructors and students. Initially 422 adults with their respective instructors began the study. Participants were matched according to sex, age and past schooling and were randomly assigned to experimental and control groups. Time sequence for the study was from October 1, 1975 to May 31, 1976 or a period of eight months.

However, during this period 165 adult students were lost to ungovernable circumstances; thus the study finished with matched experimental and control groups of 92 and unmatched adult participants of 165 students or a total study population of 257 adult learners. Table 1 shows the distribution of the study populations.

Insert Table 1 about here

Testing Instruments Used

At the beginning of the study the Nelson-Denny Reading Test, Revised, Form A was administered to all participants and Form B of the same Reading Test (Nelson-Denny, 1960) was administered at the end of the study to the matched groups only. The unmatched adult participants were 'no longer available' at the end of the eight-month period. In addition to the standardized testing, ten Informal Silent Readings of various controlled lengths, contents and reading difficulties were administered according to given time schedule. These Readings were designed to measure continuing growth in word recognition and comprehension of words, phrases, paragraphs and connected texts followed by fact-, vocabulary- and inference questions increasing in difficulty and complexity. Table 2 shows kind and distribution of the questions to be answered in writing after the passages have been read silently.

Insert Table 2 about here

Instruction

Instruction given only to experimental and unmatched adult groups was based on application and integration of the fourteen sections of THE READING PROJECT supported by a Guided Reading-Inquiry-Response-Verification activity. Participating instructors of experimental and unmatched groups received instructions in how to apply and integrate all or parts of THE READING PROJECT together with adult reading materials through scheduled

follow-up workshops. Control groups received conventional instructions.

Findings

Standardized testing prior to the beginning of instruction, did not reveal major initial differences in reading performances of participants. However, when matched groups were retested after completion of instruction period, statistically significant differences were found on the .01 level of confidence. Table 3 shows mean differences and their associated t-values in vocabulary, comprehension and total reading.

Insert Table 3 about here

When raw scores of standardized post-tests in comprehension and total reading were compared with those of the ten Informal Silent Readings, differences were found to be statistically significant on the .05 level of confidence as shown in Table 4.

Insert Table 4 about here

When correct and incorrect responses given in writing to the Informal Silent Readings of experimental and control groups were compared, differences statistically significant on the .05 and .01 levels of confidence were found as shown in Table 5.

Insert Table 5 about here

When the means and their differences of the pre-test raw

scores of the Nelson-Denny Reading Test were compared with those of the Informal Silent Readings of the unmatched adult participants, differences statistically significant on the .01 level of confidence were found as shown in Table 6.

Insert Table 6 about here

Summary

The study of action research reported here was concerned with the effectiveness of the application and integration of THE READING PROJECT in the day-to-day instruction in ABE and adult Upgrading Programs. The study was sponsored by Canada Manpower in co-operation with the Department of Continuing Education in the Province of Saskatchewan.

Analyses of formal and informal tests have shown reading improvements when all or parts of the fourteen sections of THE READING PROJECT were used, applied and integrated in daily instruction. Statistically significant gains in vocabulary, comprehension and total reading have been realized when mean differences of pre-test scores were compared with those of post-test scores, when comprehension and total reading scores were compared with responses on Informal Silent Readings and when formal pre-test raw scores of total reading were compared with total raw scores of the Informal Silent Readings.

From the results of this study the following general and specific recommendations were deduced.

General Recommendations

(1) People enrolled willingly or unwillingly in ABE and other Upgrading Programs are adults. (2) Adults can learn to learn. (3) Adults bring with them their own past experiences, present actual expectations and future goals that are either furthering or hindering reading-learning endeavors and performances. (4) Whatever kind of learning to occur through reading, subject matter appears to be more readily digestible when embedded in and growing out of life-like experiences to become life-like learning. (5) Life-like learning in a communicative and inquisitive setting will encourage active-constructive behaviors versus a lecture-book dominated instructional setting that may encourage passive-destructive learning behaviors. (6) Group or individual instruction must challenge and encourage all adult learners to partake and share in learning with others. (7) What is learned or believed to be learned must be applied and transferred by the learner independently to similar and new learning situations.

Special Recommendations

(1) Reading, intrinsic to all subject matter areas, cannot be divorced from them. Therefore, reading must be taught in subject matter and by all subject matter instructors in ABE. (2) All ABE instructors in this province should become more knowledgeable in teaching, applying and integrating reading in daily adult instruction. (3) To work towards this goal, the use of THE READING PROJECT together with an inquiry-type

instruction is strongly recommended. (4) THE READING PROJECT must not be adopted as a page-by-page fill-in-the-blank seat work, but rather adapted meaningfully to what an adult brings to the learning task and to what he needs to progress. (5) What has been learned in and through reading should result in mastery so that the learner is able to transfer and apply the knowing within his own life style and environment. (6) Reading must become an independent and a purposeful, thinking activity in order to assist in keeping gainful employment and partaking constructively in a fast moving technological oriented society. (7) Beyond reading to learn in its broadest sense, adult students must be exposed to and experience reading as a life-long tool for personal enjoyment and worthwhile leisure activities.

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Table 1

Distributions of matched and unmatched adult study population

	Population	N	Total Age	Age Range	Mean Age	Mean Differences M	Mean Differences F
Experimental	total	46	1,156	16-57	25.13	-4.36	+1.72
	male	13	270	17-30	20.77		
	female	33	886	16-57	26.85		+6.08
Control	total	46	1,236	17-57	26.87	-3.81	+2.03
	male	16	369	18-49	23.06		
	female	30	867	17-57	28.90		+5.84
Unmatched	total	165	4,160	16-57	25.21	-2.11	+1.48
	male	68	1,571	17-51	23.10		
	female	97	2,189	16-57	26.69		+3.59

Table 2

Distribution of fact(F), vocabulary(V) and inference(I) questions after Informal Silent Reading

Informal Silent Reading

Questions	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total
(F)	4	5	3	3	3	3	3	4	3	4	35
(V)	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	3	27
(I)	4	3	4	4	4	4	4	3	5	3	38
Totals	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	100

Table 3

Statistical comparison of mean differences (MD) and their associated t-calues in vocabulary(Vo), comprehension(Co) and total reading(TR) of pre-and post test grade equivalent norms of the Nelson-Denny Reading Test for experimental(E) and control(C) adult groups

Groups	Vo-MD	t	Co-MD	t	TR-MD	t
E	6.0348	2.7688*	7.3826	3.4997*	6.3935	2.9590*
C	1.8344	.8416	2.5734	1.2199	1.6039	.8897

*.01 = 2.632

Table 4

Nelson-Denny Reading post-tests in comprehension and total reading versus Informal Silent Readings for experimental(E) and control(C) adult groups

Groups	Comprehension mean differences	t	Total Reading mean differences	t
E	24.1848	2.5005*	30.8531	2.5239*
C	2.0053	1.1973	.9022	.3829

*.05 = 1.987

Table 5

Responses to the questions of the ten Informal Silent Readings for experimental(E) and control(C) groups

Groups	Correct mean	Incorrect mean	Mean differences	t
E	±18.6791	±13.2155	5.4564	6.0474**
C	±14.0997	±15.3237	-1.2240	-2.1024*

*.05 = 2.014 **.01 = 2.690

Table 6

Nelson-Denny Reading pre-test raw scores on total reading versus those of the Informal Silent Readings for unmatched adult participants

Groups	N	Total Reading mean	Informal Readings mean	Mean differences	t
otal	165	±22.6163	±17.1078	5.5085	2.5259*
male	68	±19.6755	±18.2452	1.4303	- .2273
female	97	±24.4779	±16.2292	8.2487	3.3488**

*.01 = 2.609 **.01 = 2.626